

SEVEN NEW

S E R M O N S

TO

A S S E S.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
SERMONS TO ASSES.

JUDGES iii. 22.

And the Dirt came out.



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TO THE
PETITIONERS
AGAINST THE
DISENTERS BILL.

I Know no persons to whom Sermons to Asses can, with more propriety, be dedicated than to you. Like Issachar, you are ready to couch down under every burden, and submit to the meanest slavery. Your submission to a burden of unmeaning Articles, to you may appear reasonable; for you have an undoubted right to be slaves, if you please:—But it is even beneath the character of Asses to desire to enslave others. Could you not have been satisfied with your own burdens, and suffered the dissenters to be freed from theirs. Your petition savours rank of misanthropy, and your practice is like that of prostitutes, who, after they have parted with their own virtue, are the most zealous in seducing o-

thers. You assume the name of Protestant dissenters, but I should rather suspect you to be Infidels,—who had given revelation as a sacrifice to human compositions. If the scriptures are not sufficient for directing the faith and duty of Christians, you are right; but provided they are profitable for all things to make believers perfect, your petition is not only against the bill of Protestant dissenters, but against the supremacy of Jesus Christ our Lord, and the perfection of divine revelation. Through all the varnish of outward piety and zeal for religion, the dirt of your deism will come out. Though these sermons may perhaps do you no good, they are intended for your edification, and are left to your serious consideration.

The AUTHOR.

MORE DIRT CAME OUT, &c.

JUDGES iii. 22.

And the dirt came out.

MORE dirt still! will we never be cleansed from nastiness? truly it has but an ill appearance, when matters are thus carried on in the land of Moab.—While there are so many secret committees, scratching dirt together, and washing none of it away, it is not to be supposed that Moab will be clear of filthiness, or Kerioth * purged from her impurity. Moral dirt and nastiness in Moab was like her national debt, it was long in becoming less.

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* The Metropolis of Moab.—Amos ii. 2.

For want of œconomy the people were oppressed, and the king was poor. Every thing was taxed, from the souls of the subject to their very skins. As soon as ever a soul happened to enter a body, and the body became visible, they were caught hold of by state priests, who set a price upon their heads, and taxed them directly.

This argued that there was little œconomy in the nation, when they were not able to pay the officers of the state, without making a valuation of soul, body, and spirit over all the land. It was no wonder that aged persons were brought in to help to pay the reckoning, when poor little strangers, who had never been partakers of the benefit of the police of the country, were laid under contribution.

The landed interest of Moab appears to have been very low, and the country very poor; for they were obliged, when they had mo-

ney to raise, to tax the sun, moon, and stars, house and shop windows, and sky-lights. In this land of oppression nothing was free from taxing, except whores and bawdy-houses.—These were kept clear for the benefit of the C——t, and the service of M——rs of state. Eglon, though he was fat in person, was always poor in purse; for though his revenues were very large, and amounted to very near a million of English coin, yet his ministers and stewards were so profuse in squandering away his annual income, that the civil list was continually deficient, and new demands made every meeting of the national convention for an augmentation. The secret services of the minister drained his Majesty's coffers, and made him a bankrupt every year. The subjects felt all this sensibly; for the money was obliged to be raised from all ranks of people, to supply the extravagances of the court. This

alienated the hearts of the subjects from the king, and raised complaints over all the nation. There was no confidence between Eglon and his people; for tyranny always destroys confidence, and removes love and affection.

There was one fore dirty grievance in the land of Moab, which in the end ruined the constitution of their country. The representatives of the nation, who should have been the guardians of their liberties, sold them to the crown, for places, pensions, and perquisites; so that the very institution, which was originally intended to defend the nation from slavery, became in time the only means of wreathing a yoke of bondage about the necks of the people. This evil proceeded from the importation of foreign manners, and foreign luxury. The Moabites travelled abroad, and saw the splendour and luxury of foreign courts, where kings were arbitrary, and

princes did what they pleased. When they came home, the impression of those gaudy images continued to act upon their imaginations, and they coveted to enjoy the same things in their own country. But what helped much to answer their purpose, they brought home patterns of the things they wanted to have introduced, which caught the fancy of others, and made them travel to the same places, to bring home some of the same commodities. In process of time Moab became a new nation; the old customs were altered;—simplicity, frugality, and the ancient plainness of that nation, were changed for foreign fopperies and luxuries, which all tended to render the minds of men effeminate, and at the same time inclined them to sell every thing, to obtain the objects of their desire.

It was the cause of much infelicity to Moab, that a great number of those who went abroad as mere

adventurers, and had not learned the principles of morality and honour before they left their own country, grew rich in the regions of the East, and came home loaden with money, and drowned in vice. For want of education and good breeding, when they became rich, they turned intolerably proud; they thought themselves the equals, or rather the superiors, of the ancient nobility, and endeavoured to outshine them in splendour and magnificence. This awakened the jealousy and pride of the ancient grantees, who thought it beneath them to be out-done by those who had formerly been their fathers' footmen, and had obtained all their education in the kitchen. This, to be sure, was folly, but it was not easily prevented. The barons and knights in Moab endeavoured to keep their splendour equal to that of those Eastern Nabobs, till at last their finances were reduced, and

they were obliged to turn panders for the court, to save themselves from ruin and beggary.

Eglon, and his minister Metophis, looked upon this as a good opportunity to play the game of tyrants; they took the advantage of the necessities of the great people, and introduced a system of places which was only to be enjoyed by the friends of the court, or such as wished well to its interests. By this means those who were appointed by the nation to guard their liberties in parliament, were corrupted, and sold their constituents for a place under, or a pension from the government. Morality left Moab before slavery entered; but as soon as the principles of truth and honour departed, then slavery was rendered systematic, and considered as a necessary part of the police, by those who served their interests thereby.

True-born Englishmen must pity Moab in such a situation, and con-

gratulate themselves in their present happy circumstances. How happy is Great-Britain! where the people are easy, and the King rich; where no oppressive loads of taxes sit hard upon the poor subjects; but where all ranks of people rejoice together in the right use of plenty, honesty, and honour. An Englishman may look at the sun, and gaze at the stars through every window in his house, and none dare ask him a farthing for so doing. His windows are his own, and heaven sends him his light without fee or reward; and who dare tax the bounties of God Almighty? None but Moabites. No spies nor court peripatetics dare circumambulate the house of an Englishman, to count his windows, or tell the number of the chinks in his walls. It would be uncharitable to suppose that in a christian land there would be any imitations of heathenish oppression; the light of truth shining into the

hearts of men prevents them from all acts of injustice and tyranny. In England every man who is baptized receives the holy ghost according to the articles of the church, and must of consequence be sanctified wholly both soul and body. It cannot possibly happen that any thing impure, unjust, or unholy, can dwell where the Holy Ghost resides.

Great-Britain being wholly inhabited by christians, except a few Jews in London, or in some large towns, must of consequence be very different from heathen and infidel nations. When an English officer goes to China, or Bengal, he carries his religion along with him, and, for fear of offending God, abstains from all evil. This is the reason why Lord C--ve, after staying in India for many years, came home with a very competent portion of the good things of this life, and the blessing of heaven along with it. This good G——l brought home all the virtue

which he carried out with him, and for his virtuous offices in behalf of the needy and distressed, was created, by our most gracious Sovereign, who knows how to distinguish merit, a Peer of Great-Britain. Who knows how much a person, who was in the least heathenishly disposed, might in a few years, have gathered together in that land of gold and silver?—But as for his Lordship, he was modestly satisfied with seventy thousand pounds per annum of British currency; This declared him possessed of a very christian disposition. His early education in his native country never forsook him during all the time of temptation in India; for mercy, modesty, and disinterestedness were conspicuous in his behaviour all the time of his pilgrimage in that sinful part of the world. A Moabite would have brought as much money home from such a rich country as India, as would have purchased the whole if,

land of Great-Britain: But his Lordship was christianly pleased with seventy thousand pounds a-year.

The Moabites were such extravagant and dirty people, that when once they had gained large sums of money, they engaged in electioneering, and in a short time squandered away their fortunes in corrupting their fellow-subjects. But our Christian Nabobs, instead of coveting to be great, and seeking to rank with Peers and Barons, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and relieve the distressed; so that it is almost impossible for the sovereign himself to persuade them by his authority to accept of a ribbon or a garter. Lord C—ve will shine in the annals of modesty, charity, and liberality, as long as mankind are able to remember how bountifully he gave away his jaghire to the poor, the miserable, blind, and naked. G— — S— — h and his Lordship will stand first in the registers of

fame for chastity, charity, and every christian virtue and grace. The ill-natured scabbed scum of the earth, the illiterate populace, who pick up all the lies which are published in chronicles, journals, morning and evening posts, may traduce these amiable characters as they please, but it is well known that they are perfect patterns of virtue and godliness; that except Lord S—d—h, there are few persons more godly in the nation. It is scarcely possible for a christian to endure to hear how wickedly the vulgar talk against their superiors, merely because they are more virtuous than themselves; they speak of a Minister of S—te keeping a brace of w——es as if it were the sin against the Holy Ghost, and cry out against them for devouring the nation's money as if it were the sin of Sodom; whereas it is well known that nobody of rank would regard them if they did not do the first, and without the latter

they would not be able to do it. Had those patriots been in Moab, they durst not for the ears of their head, have proceeded as they do; they would soon have been shut up in the Tower of Kerioth, to bring them to consideration, and been made to feel the smart of their folly, for mentioning that stale and antiquated thing liberty. Liberty! Have the scum of the earth any liberty? Did providence intend that they should be free who have no money, and are of no service to the government, unless to be sent to St Vincent's to kill the Caribbs, and to be scorched to death with the heat of the sun? Liberty is only the privilege of such as have acquired good fortunes, and are friends to good ministers: these have a right to bask in the sun-shine of favour, and rest at ease in the midst of every delicious pleasure.—The poor were made for their service, and are their own goods and chattels. Since liberty came in

fashion, persons of rank and condition cannot enjoy their pleasures, without being posted up as sinners, in every news-paper in the nation. Were those printers among the Moabites, their printing presses would soon be converted into fuel for the royal kitchen, or burnt by the hands of the common hangman. But the meek temper of christian ministers of state makes them endure all things, and suffer all things, for the sake of their own interest. History cannot afford an instance of any christian government, ever attempting to restrain the liberty of the press. The Moabites, the Ammonites, the Hittites, the Perisites, and Jebusites, may have done it; but mind, these people were not christians, but heathens. If any of them have got into this nation, *Libera nos domine*—but we hope better things from the influence of the christian religion. We know that our King is pious, and, according

to his station, has a negative in every act of parliament when he pleases; and if some wicked people were disposed to frame bad laws, he surely would not suffer them—nay, forbid it, ye powers which preside over royalty!—suffer not the best of Kings to stain his reign, and tarnish his character, by such indifference about the welfare of his subjects.

In the land of Moab there was one very dirty practice;—the judges were partial, and perverted the law. This appears manifest, from the threatening which the Almighty denounces against them, *And I will cut off the judges from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof, saith the Lord,* Amos ii. 3. The threatening plainly supposes, that the judges were corrupt, otherwise the Lord would not have threatened to cut them off. In that land of ungodliness, judges thought it no crime to mislead and brow-beat

juries, and alter records : This they could do with impunity, because the princes supported them. Such as were not friends to administration, were sure to lose their cause however righteous it might be; for though it could not be done by the laws of the land, yet the judges could find precedents, which served the same purpose. In heathen countries, this is very frequently done. Nothing could prevent the like practices amongst judges in Great Britain, but the power of godliness, and the influence of the gospel, which rule in the hearts of christian magistrates:—For as all the judges in England are regenerated when they are baptized, it must of consequence preserve them from sinning till they are confirmed; and being again established by a second regeneration, by the hands of the Bishop, they are preserved from doing wrong till the end of their days. This must certainly be the

reason why we seldom find that when writs of error are obtained, that the sentences of the judges are reversed by the Parliament: They are always found to be so perfect, that they need no alteration. Some ill-natured people have affirmed, that the judges in North Britain behaved but indifferently upon a certain occasion, a few years ago, and determined a cause against a righteous heir of an estate, which the peers of the realm saw meet to reverse. But as this happened principally through the tenderness of the conscience of the president of the court, it ought to be gently censured, because it is a case of conscience. That gentleman was convinced of his former error, by a powerful illumination, which he was not able to resist, and for that reason changed his opinion for the sake of his conscience. Some say that it was a dirty affair; but this I shall leave to the Doctors of Edin-

burgh, who are better acquainted with his lordship's cases of conscience than I am. I hope that the uncharitable and censorious populace will not compare the president of the c——t of f——n in Scotland to Moabites, or the sons of Ammon. They ought to remember that his lordship is a christian, and a judge in a christian nation, where a man may err, but cannot go wrong.

The Moabites were very filthy, and dirty sinners. There seems to have been Sodomites amongst them; for the Almighty threatens them, that *he will make them like Sodom*. Zeph. ii 9. This is a crime peculiar to heathens, and is quite inconsistent with the christian religion. The Greeks, and Romans, and Moabites practised it, and their magistrates winked at it, because they practised it themselves; but wherever it is overlooked, it is absolutely certain that there are no christians there.

It is a great happiness to us who

live in Great Britain, that no such crime is ever committed amongst us, but what meets with an exemplary punishment. Both the laws and judges condemn it; and the criminal is appointed unto death, without benefit of clergy, or hope of pardon. Such monstrous dirt and nastiness cannot be endured in any christian nation: But among the Moabites it was common and open, and though for the sake of form the judges and juries sometimes condemned the guilty culprits, yet the King's mercy preserved the sinner, and overlooked the crime. The court of Moab seems to have been full of S—ites; for though the King himself was clear of the crime, the intercession of his ministers, who had a fellow feeling for those dirty sinners, prevailed with him to pardon those unclean persons. Such unnatural vices as were practised in Moab are fit to make the flesh of a christian shiver; but how must it

fill the soul with horror, to think that such as were living in the constant practice of this horrid sin, were also living upon the spoils of their country, and eating the bread of the government. O happy England! who can charge thee with vices of this sort? The powerful doctrine which is so frequently preached by thy Bishops prevents such impurity to be found in thee. The large and liberal sums of money, which are bestowed upon them, are truly and properly applied. Their doctrine drops like the dew, and distils like the rain; they are instant in season, and out of season. Is there a Sunday that passes, upon which they do not preach? And are they not careful to have all the churches filled with learned, honest, and faithful ministers? Satan is now set adrift, and forced to flee the country. Some of thy clergy, O England! have banished the devil out of the world; there is no scare-crow

now to fright the ladies, nor are there any such words in the Bible as either hell or the devil, to frighten timorous souls. It is only in Moab, or heathen countries, that such dirt comes out.

S E R M O N II.

JUDGES iii. 22.

And the dirt came out.

THE people of Israel had done evil in the sight of the Lord; before that they were delivered up to the tyranny of Eglon King of Moab.---This is manifest from the 12th verse of this chapter where our text is. Men may thank themselves for every yoke of slavery which is wreathed about their necks. Their own hands twist the cords which keep them in bondage. A wicked people can never be free. The Almighty vindicates his own character, when he delivers wicked na-

tions up to the dominion of tyrants; because when they transgress his laws, they renounce his authority, and by that means become slaves to their lusts. The service of God is the only true liberty, and is infallibly attended with peace and happiness.---But when a people indulge themselves in the gratification of forbidden pleasures, they make God their enemy, and then none can help them. Eglon and his people were but savages to take advantage of Israel's misfortune.---This was not the first ill turn which Moab intended the seed of Jacob: When Israel was in the wilderness, the Moabites seduced them from the ways of righteousness by their daughters, and their gods.---*And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab; and they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel*

joined himself to Baalpeor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, Numb. xxv. 1, 2, 3. There was a trick for ye!... When they could not subdue Israel by force of arms, they overcame them by their women. They knew if they could once introduce whoredom and idolatry into the camp of Israel, they would soon ruin them. The Israelites learned fornication from the Moabites, as the English learn gallantry from the Italians and French. It is dangerous to have too much correspondence with foreigners, lest we should import more of their vices than their money or their virtue.

Moab appears to have been a lascivious, unclean nation, full of moral dirt and nastiness.—It was no wonder *that the dirt came out*. I wish I could spare the fair sex.—It is a pity to find them in the kennels of uncleanness; but there has been little *dirt* in the world where they have not had their fingers. When

men are bent upon pursuing their lusts and gratifying their appetites, they are near to destruction. Where will not a man's lusts lead him when he gives way to them? Israel, to please the damsels of Moab, bowed down to their idols, and joined themselves to Baalpeor. Dirty and unclean persons will sell their souls, and their religion, to have their lusts satisfied. There is nothing which more effectually cools the affections of the mind of virtue and goodness, than sensual lusts; for unclean Moabites will sell their nearest and their dearest things to obtain what lasts but for a moment, and leaves an abiding sting behind it. The Moabitish lusts, when they were ingrafted into the constitution of the Israelites, made them sell their God and their glory for a momentary gratification. These poor unclean creatures, I cannot tell what to compare them to; they are like—they are like—to a Scots Presby-

terian bowing his knee at the altar, in an English church, for a post or a pension under the government. How decently would an Israelite appear, escorted by a Moabitish harlot, to perform the sacred orgies of his holiness Baalpeor! No Israelite, in whom there is no guile, would attend devotion in such a manner. Such practices are peculiar to heathens; for none who fear the God who made the universe will prostitute their characters, or pollute their consciences with such abominable things.

In Britain it is a thing unknown for the fearers of the Lord to commit uncleanness. Men of rank and character flee from harlots, as they would shun the pestilence. The situation of Doctors Commons at present, is a living proof of the chastity of the *Primores optimatum* of Great-Britain. Those officers whose business it is to deal with fornicators, and issue divorces, have of late

years had but a poor time of it. Their fees have decreased in such a degree, that it is a wonder how they make a shift to live; and unless they were otherwise provided for, they could not breathe upon the quantity of fornication which is practised in Great-Britain at this day.

It was otherwise in Moab; the Doctors who presided over fornication in the temple of Chemosh, were never a term without several capital causes, which issued in a divorce, and brought swinging fees to the judges who superintended the article of dirt.—But all this, though it brought liberal sums to the clergy, and totally seperated a man from his wife, and a wife from her husband, did not hinder the parties from marrying again; the parliament of Moab could set aside the divorce in that particular, and grant liberty to both parties, to chuse new partners to themselves. There is

an instance in the history of Moab where the Duke of Shittim, after having neglected the Earl of Heshbon's daughter, and tempted her to commit *crim. con.* with my Lord Nebo, pursued for a divorce from his Lady, and she was accordingly divorced from him; but in a very short time she was married to my Lord Nebo, and the Duke of Shittim took to wife a daughter of one of the priests of Chemosh. So matters were much in the situation they were in before.

But this practise was contrary to the laws of nature, and the whole tenor of revelation. But what does the men of Moab regard the scriptures? They are all heathens, and pay no regard to the Old or New Testaments. Were such a thing done in England, they might as soon eat the mitres from the heads of the Bishops, and tear their lawn-sleeves into targets, as think to live all their life-time in adultery. The

parliament, instead of relieving them from the censures of the church, would confirm the sentence of divorce, and they could never enjoy a place nor office under the government. The King would kill them with frowns, and the church would not allow them to take the sacrament; which is the only test whereby they can be qualified for any office, in his majesty's service in England or Ireland.

In this christian land adultery is accounted such a heinous sin, that if an adulterer was to go to court the whole of his Majesty's favourites would frown upon him, and forbid him their company; and our most pious sovereign would as soon admit the plague into his house, as suffer a whore-monger to attend his court. These votaries of Venus, and Devotees of Baalpeor, would not even be admitted into the lobby among noblemen's servants and footmen, for fear of corrupting

them. Since the execution of Captain J——s, all unclean persons keep at a distance from the court—and well they may, for what concord hath light with darkness? Or what agreement can the godly ministers of a pious prince have with a——ers, f——tes, and fornicators?

But alas! the case is otherwise in Moab. Eglon, through the influence of his favourite Metophs, admitted all the fornicators, who were friends to arbitrary government, and tyrannical measures, into his confidence; and when one of his own brothers thought fit to forsake the ways of uncleanness, and marry after, he could never be prevailed upon to admit him into his presence. While the most notorious fornicators, and men suspected of the most unnatural wickedness, were objects of royal favour, and were suffered to bask in the sunshine of the court, the royal brother was obliged to keep at a distance, and spend an in-

nocent rural life with his lady in the harmless retreats of the country.

When a true-born Englishman reflects upon these things, what reason has he to value his privileges? Had he been born in Moab, or brought up among the Midianites, he could have called nothing his own; and what is still worse, he might have been taught to think light of sin, and run riotously with all the sons of wickedness, in the most shocking vices and abominations. Instead of receiving the Holy Ghost at baptism, and being confirmed in a state of grace by the hands of a holy bishop—instead of being taught the catechism of the church, and instructed in the knowledge of who are his god-fathers and god-mothers, and what they did for him, he might have remained ignorant of those important objects of knowledge, and joined himself to Baalpeor, and feasted upon the sacrifices of the dead.

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There was one dirty vice which prevailed in the nation of Moab, in the days of Eglon, and that was selfishness. This took place of all the ideas of commonweal, and rendered every man indifferent about his neighbour's welfare. It prevailed so far, that the most near relations and friends lost all the feelings of humanity towards one another; and provided they could find materials to nourish their own pride, and support their own interest, they were indifferent if all others went to the *Devil*. In towns, contiguous shop-keepers, and persons in the same branch of business, envied and grieved at one another's prosperity, and nothing pleased them so much as to hear that they were fallen back and at the point of being made bankrupts. They were sure to improve every hint to the disadvantage of their neighbours, and magnify every disagreeable circumstance beyond all the bounds of charity and

truth. The ladies at their tea-tables (for we may be sure they would not want tea in Moab, for they were nearer the East Indies than the people of England,) were ready to attribute the failing of the husband to the extravagances of his wife, and hand about her reputation through every gossiping society, with colourings no ways favourable to her interest.—And the husband, among his most intimate friends and companions, as soon as he was perceived not to be in the mercantile stile, a good man, was painted forth as a monster of villainy, unfit for the society of trading Moabites: Yet this was all done in his absence, when he was not present to hear it; for they accounted it immoral in the land of Moab to speak ill of a man to his face, because it gives him pain, and uneasiness, and may provoke him to do or say a rash thing, with respect to the person who traduces him. But when he

is not present, there is no harm in abusing him, because he does not hear it, and can do no mischief to those who abuse him. This was a very dirty practice, and never can possibly happen in any christian nation. In England, though this practice is not expressly mentioned in the thirty-nine articles, & there are no acts of Parliament against it, yet it never can be pursued in that nation, nor any other, when the inhabitants believe the gospel; and the reason why there are no articles nor laws against private scandal is, because the gospel supposes it impossible for a christian to be guilty of it---and always declares those who practise it to be Moabites, and not true Israelites. In this blessed and happy land, you may go into a thousand companies, and hear them speak upon as many subjects; but unless there are some Moabites amongst them, you will hear nothing except truth, mutual tenderne's,

and love expressed concerning all mankind.

The women in England are not like the jilts in Moab, who were continually either gossiping or doing nothing. The fair sex in this holy nation are better employed; the young women attend constantly to domestic exercises, such as spinning, sewing, knitting, or such-like honest employments. Here you will not find a lady who does not wear a gown of her own spinning, and a head-dress of her own making. You would almost take every house to be a manufactory, and every lady to have served an apprenticeship to her business. The mothers are constantly employed in teaching their daughters virtue and oeconomy, and the daughters imitate their mothers in every virtuous principle and deed. Children in England are not instructed in notions of their own consequence and importance, nor allowed to hope for praise till they

deserve it. The little masters and misses are taught to fear God, and to honour their parents and superiors, before they are put to the dancing-school, or suffered to keep company. They are all first made to read over the Bible, before a novel or a play is suffered to come near them.---And as for modesty in the young girls, and meekness in the boys, which is all owing to their good education, the Spartans were but a faint imitation thereof. You will not see a young well-bred English lady set up her crest and talk with assurance and pertness, but a modest diffidence of her own abilities, express herself with a free yet decent deportment,

In Moab the case was the reverse; the women there were intolerable. You might have travelled over a whole county, and gone through a whole town before you had seen a woman of any quality, who knew how to spin wool, flax, or cotton; or who

could knit a pair of stockings for her own legs.---Pardon the expreffion,---for what have legs to do in a fermen? There you might have perceived a family of young women all fitting with their arms crofs-ways, inclined down-wards, retailing scandal, with their tongues, and abufing the character of fome abfent perfon. If one of their own fex was married, they would diminifh her fortune and virtue to fuch a degree, that thofe who knew no better, would have imagined fhe was a beggar and a profligate. He has gotten a fine bargain.----Poor man!----Had he known her as well as I do, it would never have been a match.---But the creature was fuch a wheedling minx. ---You know how fhe behaved at the ball.---Ah what impertinence!---She is,---I ll fay no more concerning her.

In this land of vanity and fin, the firft books that a young lady is taught are the Fafhionable Lovers,

the Provok'd Wife, some Lectures upon Quadrille, and the Way to keep Him, and a number of profane novels which an English lady would tremble to read, for fear of tainting her virtue. In Moab it was usual for the Duchess of Heshbon, or the Mayorefs of Kerioth, to bespeak a play, and invite all their neighbours, and treat them with tickets; this was intended to give opportunity for assignations, and to learn them to be fashionable lovers. In consequence of such behaviour, there were few days passed in Moab without some accounts of dirt coming out, and discoveries made of scenes of iniquity, which an English lady could not endure to hear mentioned. But lest I should make the godly ladies of Great-Britain blush, I shall conclude this discourse.

S E R M O N III.

JUDGES iii. 22.

And the dirt came out.

IT is highly probable that some christian monarchs would have done the same thing that Eglon did, provided they had been as sore frightened as he was. He had received a mortal wound from the dagger of Ehud, and was struggling with the agonies of death. Perhaps he was not acquainted with the system he was then going to enter into, and was afraid lest he should be called to an account for his mal-administration in this present world. Wicked men make a poor figure at their latter end; their consciences tell them what they deserve, and the uncertainty of forgiveness of their crimes creates a horror in their minds, which the highest degree of natural bravery cannot overcome. Having

never been acquainted with the character of divine mercy, during their pilgrimage in this world, they are afraid when they die, that the Deity will be as unrelenting towards them in the next life, as they have been to others in this present system. Eglon was an oppressor, and a tyrant, and had never cultivated the ideas of mercy in his own heart; he knew not but all other beings was as malevolent as himself, and were terrified that the measure he had met would be measured to him again, in a place where he had no authority, power, nor interest to secure himself. All sinners who die in their iniquities will make but a dirty latter end. Death brings princes and peasants to the same situation in point of authority and power; and a royal carcase will rot in the grave, as easily as that of a slave.

Moab, from the earliest period of its existence as a nation, seems to have been the very sink of wicked-

ness. From the days of Moses, till the time of the prophet Amos, the whole history of that people declares that they were desperately wicked. The psalmist compares Moab to a Washing pot, thereby signifying the impurity and filthiness of that people.

If I were to describe the filthiness of Moab at large, and to set forth in order the vices of that dirty nation, it would be impossible to make the people of Great Britain believe that there were such monsters in the world. The charity which Christianity obliges the people in England to practise, would not suffer them to think, that there was so much sin and abomination in the habitable globe. To give a brief hint of the character of the Moabites, it may be necessary to consider the state of their clergy, their judges, their army, and police.

First, with regard to their clergy, it may be observed, that they were both covetous and profane. Baalam, who was one of the chief of

them, and probably sustained a character much like that of metropolitan of all England, was a very selfish and wicked man. Under the government of such a selfish and covetous chief, it cannot well be supposed that the inferior part of the clergy would be very virtuous. Imitation has a great influence upon mankind, and inferiors are always ready to look up for a pattern from their superiors, and as ready to copy it, provided it suits the leading bent of their inclinations. It is said of Balaam, that he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Perhaps he preached but seldom, and was a severe exacter of tithes; this was both unfair, and unrighteous. — For no man ought to enjoy perquisites which are annexed to the duties which belong to any office without performing them? this is unrighteous, and unjust, and is a manifest prostitution of the end of religious appointments. The common sense of mankind will teach

every one, that there is no reason in one man's performing the labour, and another person's devouring the reward thereof. It is but just that every man should eat the fruit of his own labour. It is a scripture maxim, that those who *will not work should not eat*. If this rule was applied in practice to religious officers, prelates in all churches would receive least, because they preach seldomest. It would be miserably hard upon the poor curates in Moab to drudge and slave for the bishops, and the superior clergy, when some of them scarcely received thirty pounds a year. What an unrighteous thing must it have been for a poor working clergyman, with a large family, to preach and starve upon thirty pounds; when an huge paunched batchelor, who performed no duty, was rioting voluptuously upon twelve or fourteen thousand pounds *per annum*.

It does not appear that the clergy

of Moab rode in coaches, but that might be owing to the custom of the country.—Balaam kept a good ass; and in this we must give him the preference to our English bishops, who will be pleased with no less than a coach and six. In this particular, the priests of Baalpeor were more like our Saviour than any Christian bishops which now exist upon the face of the earth.—for they rode upon asses, as he did. Had Balaam been as like the Messiah in other respects as in this, he might have been placed in the calendar of saints; and, to do him justice, he deserved that character as much as a great many that stand there.

History does not say that there was any alteration in church government from the days of Balaam till the reign of Eglon. It is therefore reasonable to suppose, that the church of Moab was still upon the same footing upon which it was

placed by this archbishop of Pethor. Balaam seems to have been the author of the Athanasian Creed, for he was fond of cursing those who were not of his profession, and whom he thought were not friendly to his interest. It is certain that Athanasius had no hand in it, and it is very probable that it was composed by father Balaam, and found among his manuscripts by some who were searching for curiosities and antiquities. Perhaps if the vatican at Rome, or the cottonian Library at Oxford, were carefully examined, the original manuscript, or at least some very ancient copy, might be found, written in the Moabitish language; for it is manifest, that it would not be the composition of any Christian.

The idea of preferment had a great influence upon the clergy of Moab; for they did not scruple, for the hope thereof, to assist the king in the most sinful and absurd prac-

tices. Archbishop Balaam, no sooner heard the promise of honour and preferment, than he immediately saddled his ass, and set out on his journey to curse Israel. This shews how wicked the dignified clergy of that nation were; when the metropolitan of all Moab, for the hope of honour and preferment, could proceed so far as to ask God to curse a people who had never injured him. Ah! What what will not priests do, who are under the influence of the God of this world, and mean no more by assuming religious offices, than to serve their own private temporal interest? What can tempt bishops when they vote in parliament, to take sides always with the court against the liberties of their country, but a desire of honour, and the hope of gain? I mean heathenish bishops, such as are the descendants of Balaam, the metropolitan of all Moab. This is no reflection upon the apostles of our Saviour, and their follow-

ers, (for successors they had none) who walked humbly, and never asked preferment from any of the powers of this world. The true bishops, the *Επισκοποι* of Christ, who are only overseers of single congregations, expect no preferment till their Saviour come again.

It is a very dirty affair for the teachers of righteousness to covet those honours which no Christian can enjoy without endangering his principles, and wounding his conscience. Had temporal dignity ever been intended to have been united with sacred offices, there is no question but either our Saviour or his apostles would have shewn an example thereof, or given some hints of its character or necessity.-----But there is not one word in all the New Testament of this alliance, but much to the contrary. Church hierarchy is of heathen original, and owes its existence to the Archbishop of Pethor. The church of Rome, and the

church of England boast of their antiquity, and it must be allowed that their plan is very ancient; for it is derived from the scheme of government which was formed by Balaam in the days of Moses.

Secondly, the judges of Moab were corrupt, and judged for reward; they perverted justice, and oppressed the poor:---For this reason, they are threatened to be cut off. The established laws of nations are but a small defence to men's rights and privileges, when covetous persons are judges, or when judges take sides with the crown, against the subjects. When men of this character are hard pressed with statute laws, which make against their leading designs, they flee to presidents, and entrench themselves behind the opinions of former judges, who have, like themselves, perverted justice, and set aside the law.--- And in case that it should appear too glaring an insult upon the con-

stitutional laws of a nation, for judges to substitute their own opinion in the place of standing laws, it is easy for them to prevail with the legislature, to repeal some of the old ones, and make a new act of parliament for the purpose which they intend to pursue. There are many instances in history of acts of council, and the opinions of judges being put in the room of standing laws. There is an instance in England, which is called a Christian nation, and in the reign of James the Second, of pious and popish memory, when all the twelve judges, except one, gave it as their opinion, “ That the king
“ has a power to dispense with all
“ laws, and that this power is law.---
“ That the laws are the King’s laws.
“ ---That it is an inseparable prerogative of the Kings of England,
“ as of all other sovereign princes,
“ to dispense with all penal laws in
“ particular cases, and upon particular
“ necessary reasons.---That of

“ these reasons and necessities the
“ King is the sole judge.---That this
“ is not a trust invested in or grant-
“ ed to the King, but the ancient
“ remains of the sovereign power
“ of the Kings of England, which
“ was never yet taken from them,
“ nor can be.” If this had not
“ been done in a Christian land, I
should have considered it as the
highest insult to common sense, that
possibly could have been offered;
but when such an instance of partial-
ity appears to have been practised
in England, what may we suppose
to have been done in Moab, where
there were no principles of religion
to bind the consciences of men to do
their duty? in England the judges
are sworn to judge righteously, and
cannot pervert the laws, without
bringing the curse of heaven upon
their own heads, which no persons
of any wisdom would chuse to do.--
But Moabites did not mind those
matters: they could swear without

any meaning, and digest oaths as fast as a custom-house officer could do for his heart.

Thirdly the army of Moab was under very strange regulations. It was, in the first place, solely under the direction of the crown, and called in upon every emergency to enforce the arbitrary decisions of the court. Any justice of the peace in the kingdom of Moab, when the subjects were hungry, and obstreperous, could call in a file of musketeers, and oblige them to endure hunger, or stand and be shot like woodcocks. The soldiery of Moab being composed of the dregs of the people;—chiefly made up of the scourings of jails, and the spungings of counters, considered themselves as a distinct people from the rest of the nation, and made no scruple to kill the inhabitants, as if they had been a foreign enemy. Their officers, who were generally court pensioners, or expecting to be so, instruc-

ted them in all the arbitrary maxims of the court, and by flattery and threatenings brought them to obey the most sanguinary orders which they gave them; so that they had no compunction when they killed the innocent inhabitants of the country, because they believed it to be their duty to obey the commands of their officers. The greatest part of those who had the command of the military were young, wild, unprincipled prodigals, who had been sent to the army for reformation; or needy spend-thrifts, who were put in by the interest of friends, to eat the bread of the government to keep them from starving. As they had given up all moral principles before they entered upon their office, they had no pleasure except in persons of their own temper, so that the whole army was nothing but a collection of banditti, gathered from among the refuse of the people. They were generally cowards in time of dan-

ger, and tyrants when they were out of it. When the subjects of Moab listd into their army, they became people of a quite different character, and were put under a new government. Their lives and liberties were at the mercy of arbitrary officers, who, for the smallest offence, would punish them with rigour, and with unrelenting severity torture them in the cruellest manner. Those heathenish military officers, considered their men as their own goods and chattles, and on many occasions used them worse than either their horses or their dogs. Such was the state of the military government of Moab in the days of Eglon.

Fourthly, the police of Moab was in a wretched state, in the reign of this monstrous King. The state of trade, and the prices of provisions, were so disproportioned for want of proper regulations, that it was impossible for the trading part of the kingdom to live. At this time the

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poor were exceedingly wretched; for all the necessaries of life were rendered systematically dear. The labour of men's hands, and what they could gain by industry, were incompetent for the supply of nature, and were not sufficient to procure what was necessary to support their families. What was very remarkable in Moab, in the midst of all sorts of improvements in agriculture, the prices of provisions were exorbitantly high, so that the labour of a man's hands was not sufficient to support his family; and in a great abundance of trade and commerce, there was nothing to be heard except bankruptcies, among the merchants. Whether or not this arose from luxury creating laziness, and so inclining people to pursue such employments as required little labour, or that there were nearly as many sellers as there were buyers in the towns in Moab, I will not pretend to say; but it is plain from

the whole history of that country, that there were far too many engaged in lazy professions. Wine cellars, gin shops, beer houses, eating houses, of all sorts, were within one door of each other, over all the cities of Moab. Farmers, who formerly wrought at the plough turned graziers, and dealt in cattle instead of corn, because it was an easier employment. Millers, when they were tired of working, turned meal-sellers, taylor's excise officers, gentlemen's servants publicans, weavers tea-dealers, and blacksmiths, preachers. The whole bent of the national disposition was to be idle, and to be gentlemen. The women were infected with this distemper as well as the men; and those, who in former times would have been obliged to spin, or work in the dairy, learned pastry, or turned milliners and mantua-makers. Whence it happened, that the greatest part of farmers' daughters could all dress victuals,

make gowns and head-dresses, but there were few could spin a gown to their own backs, or perform the labour necessary in a family. Thus all the lazy employments were overstocked, and few engaged in laudable industry; from hence it came to pass, that those who did labour could get no money, because the others were not able to pay them.—But we shall hear this story out in the next discourse.

S E R M O N IV.

JUDGES iii. 22.

And the dirt came out.

IN the conclusion of the last discourse, it was promised to consider the police of Moab at more length;—and there is reason to fear that some impure discoveries will be made in this enquiry:—But if there is uncleanness within, *the dirt will come out.* It has been observed, that

it was a prevailing disposition among the Moabites to covet lazy employments; that the poor, as well as the rich, were zealous to be gentlemen, and were not disposed to labour or work for their livelihood. There was no possibility in Moab to settle the balance of trade, or to prevent monopoly or engrossing; for though the laws were expressly against these practices, yet there were so many ways of evading their force, that they were rendered of no effect. It was a common thing in that dirty land for magistrates to promote the crimes which the laws were made to restrain and punish. The moral and the political laws of Moab were very different, which introduced many errors in their police. The statutes of the legislature were frequently contrary to the laws of nature, and the first principles of morality. All practices which hurt the commonweal, or injure the rights of individuals, are contrary to

the principles of nature, and the rules of the moral law. Nature at first assigned mankind equal portions of necessary things, and no man had originally a right to any more than another. When men formed themselves into society, they assigned a larger dividend of lands to their leaders, and chiefs than to others; but for this reason, that they were to serve the public for this consideration, without any other fee or reward. Those who distinguished themselves by their merit, for the good of the public, were in their turn preferred; but still the reward of merit was not suffered to injure the common property of Society, nor were over-grown tyrants suffered to possess whole counties, and make whole territories their vassals. Rewards were rather honorary than lucrative, and the motives to great achievements were of the moral kind. But when corruption and vice crept in, and came to a height,

the great assumed dominion, and the poor sold their rights; from whence sprung up a monstrous inequality among men, who were at first nearly equal. Politicians, as soon as they perceived the people disposed to submit to slavery, and inclined to be bribed out of their property, proceeded to contrive laws, to secure to themselves the purchase they had made of other men's possessions; and the more effectually to fulfil their intentions, formed statutes to secure the submission of those whom they had robbed, as well as their property. Hence it was made criminal not to obey oppressors in every arbitrary precept, which they thought fit to enjoin the common people.

The law of morals obliges superiors rather to instruct the ignorant vulgar, in a just sense and use of their own privileges, than through fraud to deceive them, and by power to oppress them. For it is easy to perceive, that it is through

ignorance and want of understanding, that men are bribed out of their natural rights. Were they carefully instructed in the knowledge of their own rights and liberties, they would never sell their possessions and rights to tyrants. It proceeded originally from fraud and deceit that individuals obtained such large possessions and authority in society; and it is observable in the history of all nations, that when individuals obtained unequal dividends of the wealth of kingdoms, that revolutions were near at hand, and national ruin ensued.

In all nations, where there is a landed interest, the security of the commonwealth is best maintained by making small and numerous dividends; for thereby the greater number will be interested in the welfare of a nation.—But when only a few have a real interest and property in a country, the nerves of government must be considerably weaken-

ed. The idea of men labouring for themselves, though it appears selfish, yet will have a greater influence upon their care and diligence, than when they consider themselves toiling principally for the interest of others, who will employ them no longer than they are fit for their service. It is either possession of property, or the hopes thereof, which make men settle in one country more than another; for it is not natural for mankind to reside where they have neither hopes nor possessions, and have nothing before their eyes, except to be slaves or vassals, and to be turned away whenever they are found not fit to serve the interest of their masters.

It is probable that in Moab, their Kings, who were arbitrary, would give away large portions of land to their peculiar favourites, and by that means in process of time the nation would be shared among a few, and the rest would be vassals to those

over-grown chiefs. It is natural to infer from this, that idleness and laziness would be the consequence with regard to the greatest part, who as they had no idea of interest or property of their own, would be indifferent about the concerns of their tyrants.

Men of large estates would endeavour also to suggest to the most compliant and powerful of their vassals the idea of large farms, that they might have some persons to confide in, to carry on the designs of their ambition. By engrossing farms, and dispossessing families of those appointments which they had shared upon the same tenor, and in common with others in the same situation, it is natural to suppose that the ancient tenants behaved either to be servants to those who were formerly their equals, or seek employment in some other place, and in another condition of life. They could not all be servants to the new engrossers,

because they would have no need of them ; for it is plain from experience, that when lands are classed together, and formed systematically, they may be wrought with fewer servants, and at a less expence. What must then have been the consequence ? The old country peasants would be obliged to retire to towns, and seek to support their families in some new employment. Trade at first sight has a flattering aspect ; money appears to come in easily, and tradesmen appear to be gentlemen : But then it ought to be considered that the number of sellers ought to be proportioned to the number of buyers, otherwise a tradesman may soon have his shop full, but his purse empty. When the people in the country bring their provisions to large towns to sell, and carry away with them a proportional quantity of the merchandize of the shops, they both serve themselves and the merchants ; but when they are forced,

by engrossers of land, to retire to cities and towns to traffic in those employments which they formerly assisted in as buyers only, they must in a short time hurt business, and ruin both themselves and others. The greater quantity of merchandise there is purchased and carried out of towns, there will always be the greater advantage to trade in those places; but when the police of a nation obliges the inhabitants to over-stock those branches of business, which are not essential to life, it will always issue in the ruin of trade, and the country in process of time will be depopulated.

This dirty land of Moab suffered prodigiously in its internal principles, by the practice of monopolizing of lands; for though the quantity of the necessaries of life were not decreased, the profits arising from them were restrained to a few. The money which formerly was distributed into many purses, by the sel-

ling of corn and cattle, was now confined in the hands of a few engrossers; who, as they had not so much occasion to lay out their money as a multitude had, so were less serviceable to other branches of business, and did less good to the community.

Before the practice of engrossing farms was practised in Moab, the farmers were obliged to make their money circulate, to supply their families with necessary things, and were not able to hoard it up; but when ten or a dozen of farms had but one or two families to support, the farmers were able to lay up their cash in banks, which became so much dead stock to the community.

When there is a just proportion in the strength of a body, and the parts kept in their proper size, it will be more likely to be healthy, than when some parts are overgrown, and other parts decayed and wasted. It never can be the interest of a nation to admit of a great dif-

proportion among the ranks of its inhabitants;—and the best method to support a necessary proportion of this sort will be, to avoid the introduction of practices which destroy it. There is no other way of accomplishing this, but by establishing statute laws upon moral principles. According to the spirit of moral laws, it is as sinful for a rich man to take a poor man's farm over his head, as it is for a strong man to take a weak man's purse, because he is stronger than he. It is a fundamental maxim in morals, that as we would that men should do to us, so we should do to them in the like circumstances;—and no statute laws are just, which contradict this maxim. As there are express statutes against stealing and robbery, so, according to the spirit of the moral law, and the first principles of natural religion, there ought to be statutes against every practice whereby one man injures another.

It may perhaps be alledged, that a landholder has a right to dispose of his possessions, or let his farms, to the best advantage. If he was not a member of a community, he certainly would have none but himself to care for; but as every landholder is a member of a public, he is bound, by the laws of society, to mind its interest, as well as his own; and if there are strong symptoms of self in individuals, there ought to be laws to restrain it. If it shall be affirmed, that raising of rents excites to improvement, there is no truth in this; but there is no occasion upon this score to suffer one man to injure another, by secretly betraying him. There is no reason to suppose, that one man will improve ten farms better than ten men, when it is their interest to improve them as well as he.

All that can be said in behalf of the land-owner is, that he saves himself a little trouble, at the ex-

pence of the community; he receives his rents from one hand, and is not troubled to seek them from more quarters than one;—and, provided he receives his money, he is indifferent if the commonwealth go to the devil. Such principles and practices are fit for the meridian of Moab, but appear ugly in any christian land.

The Romans, in the time of the commonwealth, were careful that none should monopolize too great a quantity of land; and to prevent it, made several good laws, which, had they been made in a christian republic, would have been attributed to the alliance between church and state. By the Licinian law, made in the two hundred and seventy-seventh year *ab urbe condita*, no person was allowed to possess above five hundred acres of land.—This law was afterwards confirmed by the Sempronian law, which enjoined, that all persons, who held

more land than that law allowed, should immediately resign it into the common, to be divided among the poorer citizens. The intention of this law was to restrain the avarice of the rich men of the city, who had, by degrees, contrived to engross almost all the land to themselves. This law occasioned great tumults, and cost Sempronius his life.

The inventions concerning doing a great quantity of work with few hands, may well be supposed to have added to the grievances of Moab; for though these inventions tended to enrich individuals, they were the means of impoverishing the public. If one man is able to perform as much business as ten, what must the rest do? Every patent for improvement of this sort, is a privilege to destroy so many people, and tends to depopulate a nation. Unless there were also a law that the advantages of the contrivance should be distributed among

those whom it injures, and then it would tend to the good of society. He, who keeps a machine which works ten men's work, should be obliged to provide for nine of them, otherwise he is guilty of robbery, and deserves to be punished.

In the land of Moab there was nothing common but w.—rs. Every inch of ground was claimed by some engrosser, and the cautious surveyor marked out every common, which formerly was as free as the light of the sun and the air. This could not miss to have a bad effect upon the minds of the people, as it tended immediately to distress them. From a pretence of improving waste and common lands, the grandees of Moab obtained laws to have them divided; but then those who had no estates joining to those commons, received no dividend, and were deprived of the means of support which naturally belonged to them. The idea of a common suggests at

once, that it belongs to all within the district, and cannot be divided, without giving every one his proper share. The original design of commons was, that those who had no separate lands of their own, might have a common estate with so many others; and formerly, it is highly probable, that every township had a common which was the poor man's estate, as well as that of the rich. Moab never had a day to do well after the covetous landlords monopolized the common lands. The legislature in Moab might as well have made a law for the rich to divide their estates with the poor, as to have made acts of parliament to oblige the poor to part with a privilege, to which they had a prescriptive right. The claims of freedom and liberty ended with the division of commons. There was no reason why the Duke of Heshbon should have had a larger share of the common than his taylor, or shoemaker. His lands lying contiguous,

gave him no just right. I doubt much if justice intended him the smallest share: he could only obtain a part thereof, by oppression. All these dirty things shew that the police in Moab was very imperfect.

The intention of public markets is to give those who want the necessaries of life an opportunity to have them at the first hand, without being advanced by retailers or regrators.—But this intention was frustrated in Moab; for in the markets of Kerioth and Heshbon, the sellers were not obliged to sell any quantity but what they pleased, and were sure never to sell their commodities to many hands, provided they could find one person to purchase the whole. By this means, the poor inhabitants were obliged to purchase the necessaries of life at the second, third, or fourth hand, which enhanced the price, and tended to keep the markets high; so that between the landlords, farmers, corn

merchants, and petty retailers, the prices of provisions were kept high in the midst of plenty, to the utter ruin of every other branch of business and manufacture. What dirty work was this! Ah Moab! thy punishment was just, when thou wast destroyed—the cries of the poor, the needy, and fatherless, brought down the vengeance of heaven upon thee—thou art now no more—thy sins have ruined thee, and oppression hath devoured the oppressor.

But Britain may rejoice, and congratulate herself in her happy situation. Nothing, except mercy, judgment, and faith, abounds over all the land:—For here in this land of righteousness, the nobles, barons, and 'squires, commit no acts of oppression, by squeezing their dependants; their tenants complain of no advanced rents, and, on that account, are under no necessity to use indirect means to pay them. They have no occasion to join with corn merchants to keep up the markets,

because they hold their farms at a reasonable expence, and can bring all their goods regularly to market. No engrossing, forestalling, or regrating are necessary in this plentiful island; nor are the people disposed to this wicked practice. The millers are patterns of honesty, and the farmers examples of humility. But before I proceed farther, I shall give my readers a rest, and say, *Amen.*

S E R M O N V.

JUDGES iii. 22.

And the dirt came out.

IT is an unfair practice carried on in all heathen countries, that the general rules of police are all made against the poor; and the reason seems to be, that it is a rare thing to find a poor man in authority. Though a poor person may sometimes save a city, it will not procure him credit among the rich; his

good deeds will soon be forgotten, and himself no more remembered.

Wisdom has but a little share in the management of nations; and as a proof thereof, when one would think them in the fairest way to do well, they are ordinarily nearest their ruin. The Assyrian, Persian, and Roman empires are evident proofs of this assertion; for when they were at the height of their splendor, they came to nought for want of wisdom. Whether great riches, and much wisdom are incompatible in a nation, I will not pretend to say; but it appears manifest, that the fewest wise men have always been found in kingdoms where there have been the most wealth, and the greatest splendor.

I would not willingly say an hard thing of a christian nation;—but there are some who will affirm, that there never were more riches in Britain, nor greater splendor,—and will add, that there never were so many fools. Folly in Moab was not

much to be thought of; because there were no christian teachers to instruct them in the principles of wisdom. They had all their knowledge to learn from observation and experience, which requires a long time to make men proficient.---But in nations like Great Britain and France, where the christian religion is professed, there is no occasion to wait so long for a perfect understanding of the principles of wisdom: Tutors, and persons appointed by authority, instil into the minds of men at first hand, what would take twenty years to learn by observation and experience.

There is nothing more important for mankind to know, than the articles of religion, which are necessary for every one to believe. In christian nations, men are not left to follow their own judgment, which is often ready to mislead them, but are tutored in the true faith by the clergy from their very infancy. If men were obliged to read over the scrip-

tures, before they were to determine what form of religion they would chuse, it is manifest, that one half of their days would be spent before they had any religion at all ; but when a form of godliness is ready prepared for them, they have nothing to do but to embrace it, or if necessity requires, to subscribe it, and then they will pass for very good christians ; which is all that is needful for any man to reap from the present advantages of religion.

But in heathenish kingdoms, the clergy are not at the pains to relieve the common people from the trouble of manufacturing their own faith ; but suffer them to grow wise by enquiry, and to attain to understanding by seeking knowledge in the weary and toilsome paths of experience.—This appears to have been the reason why there were so many different opinions in Moab, and other Pagan countries, concerning religion ; for it does not appear that any establishment of a

church was thought upon, till the christian emperors happened to dream of it.

It was a manifest defect in the police of Moab, that religion was not considered as a part of the constitution, but left to every man's own choice; for though this was favourable to sincerity, it was no way serviceable to the police of the nation, which is always to be supposed to be intended to render it splendid and glorious. If sincerity was suffered to prevail in any nation, it would soon overturn all the rules of policy which exists in any kingdom of this world at this present time; and if this was the case, what would become of courtiers, bishops, and ministers of state? It appears to be one solid reason why all learned men in England are first taught to prevaricate with God Almighty, by subscribing what they do not understand or believe, that they are chiefly intended to be politicians in either church or state, and are therefore

obliged to learn early what is necessary to qualify them for their respective stations. This, I conceive, may be a sufficient vindication of the two universities, with regard to their obliging boys to subscribe the thirty nine articles of the church. Hereby they are taught in the early period of their lives to consider religion as serviceable to their worldly interest, and when they grow old this sentiment does not readily depart from them.

In Moab there was no such wisdom discovered in the method of instructing youth, and this must have been the reason why there were so few good politicians in those days. A dry sincerity, and blunt simplicity, could never render a man fit to make a figure in any church or commonwealth than was ever yet established by law. In England and Scotland, where there are legal establishments of religion, men are early initiated in the principles of church and state policy, and are qualified to

make a figure when it comes to their turn. This is an advantage which a Christian has above a Moabite.

It is but a dirty situation that a nation is in, when rewards are not suited to services. In Moab, though a man should have happened to have sold his conscience, and betrayed his constituents, yet the compensation was small, because the government was arbitrary, and the King's word was a law. But in Great Britain the case is otherwise; for if any man happen to stretch a point in a matter of conscience, or sell his constituents, he may have ample compensation, and be richly rewarded with either a place or a pension. Here a man does not sell his soul for nothing; if he is a religious man, he may be preferred in the church, and if he intends to live a secular life, he may be exalted in the state, and take his venture at the day of judgment. When motives to action are double, they must have a strong influence upon obedience; and he who has

both a temporal and spiritual kingdom in his view, must have stronger springs of action than he who has but one of them. This is perhaps the reason why bishops are more holy than other men, because they are influenced with the promises of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.

It was a great infelicity which befel the people of Moab, and which at last enslaved them,—that individuals seldom considered themselves as any way interested with the common welfare of their country, provided their own temporal interest was well supported. Though national grievances were great, and oppression exercised with much rigour, yet those who were not oppressed themselves, but enjoyed the favour of the great, looked with indifference upon the situation of their fellow subjects. Before Moab came under the dominion of absolute monarchy, there was a national senate, the members of which were elected

by the people, to take care of their interests in parliament. This was a great privilege, and ought never to have been given up: But when public virtue declined, this privilege was insensibly taken out of the hands of the people, with their own consent. Instead of chusing men to represent them, who were fit and worthy of being trusted, they made choice of persons who bought their places in parliament, with a design to sell their constituents upon a proper occasion.

Men who study to corrupt the people, were not likely to support their privileges; and people, who sold themselves for money, could not be long free. The consequence was, all men became venal, and at last sold their liberties to the crown, and despotism was established by their own consent. Moab, from being a free nation, through corruption, became a kingdom of slaves; and, though it long retain-

ed the form of its ancient constitution, the subjects were in reality as much slaves as in the days of Eglon; —for whatever the court desired, the parliament granted, and the crown had power to carry any point. When the chiefs of the nation found the people ripe for slavery, they threw off the mask, discontinued parliaments, set up courts of justice without juries, and ruled the nation with a rod of iron. All this proceeded from the want of national virtue, and the depravity of the people; who forgot their own interests as members of a community, through an attachment to their own private interests as individuals.—This has been the ruin of all nations, and shall be more particularly considered in the next discourse.

S E R M O N VI.

JUDGES iii. 22.

And the dirt came out.

CORRUPTION, when it once enters among individuals, operates gradually, till it produces national ruin ;—it gathers to an height at last,—and the dirt comes out. The decline of virtue, and the downfal of nations, have always kept pace with one another. They have indeed appeared most flourishing and splendid when vice abounded, —but the basis of government generally grows weak as its splendour encreases. Nations are like trees ; they make the greatest show when they flourish in trade, luxury, and riches ; but they are then weakest, and have least vital strength. Riches and selfishness ordinarily are united, or if this does not happen, dissipation attends riches ; the natural consequence of which is indifference about commonweal.

When the minds of men are corrupted by selfishness, individuals look no farther than their own private interest ;—when they are depraved by luxury, they extend their views no farther than sensual gratifications. From these two sources all national evils proceed. It is from the first of these that commonweal is exposed to sale, by men who know no o-

ther pleasures than what flow from riches ; for the sake of their own family concerns, they will expose a whole nation to sale. It is from the latter that both public and private interest are ruined.

Luxury ordinarily produces dissipation and licentiousness, and creates appetites that are not natural to men,—which, as they are unnatural in themselves, and proceed from causes hurtful to society, are in their whole operations destructive to commonweal. According as people abound in unnatural desires, they will deviate from the paths of virtue to have them fulfilled ;—and this I take to be the reason why the freeholders in Britain, who have no expectation of being highly preferred, take bribes from men whom they know are no friends to their country, and give them their votes at a general election. The unnatural desires of having what nature does not need, nor reason allow, makes them sell their best things to satisfy their immediate feelings.

The above observations may be illustrated from facts, which appear every day. It is not natural for men to eat or drink any more than is sufficient to support their constitution ; and yet we see many who contract unnatural habits of gluttony and drunkenness, which tend to destroy it, and will sell their best things to satisfy their appetites. Upon the same principles that a man sells his clothes to fulfil his desires, he will sell his country, or

the most sacred things that pertain to him. It is impossible for the legislature to prevent corruption in the state, till means are devised to restrain dissipation. As long as it is no felony to keep whores, and get drunk, it will be in vain to talk of putting a stop to bribery. A thirsty man will give any thing for a drink; and the more unnatural the cause, the thirst will be the stronger. When the Romans were virtuous, whoredom was severely punished; but when they were corrupted, it passed unnoticed.

The means of unnatural gratifications ought certainly to be restrained when they hurt the community, otherwise it will be impossible to maintain the rational liberty of a people. As long as it is fashionable to indulge loose desires without disgrace, men will covet the means which usually obtain them; and when those desires become habitual, their strength will encrease, and make them covet a greater gratification. When this is the case, the means of procurement must be enlarged also, which will incline them to dispose of the readiest things they can find to obtain the objects of their desires. We may observe in experience, that from a principle of vanity, or from a desire of appearing gay, a man will dispose of his estate for the sake of fine clothes; and to obtain an impure momentary gratification, a lascivious person will dispose of those necessary

things which would both relieve his necessities, and contribute to his honour.

Let us suppose, that the interests of a man's country, and the unnatural desires proceeding from his dissipation, should come in competition; he will be ready to answer the strongest feeling, and pursue the habit which has the strongest ascendent over him. A person under the dominion of selfish or lascivious feelings, which have been unnaturally created by tasting forbidden pleasures, will always find a stronger propensity towards enjoyment than in ordinary cases; the reason is, unnatural desires are the most violent. From hence it may be observed, that none except virtuous men can be true patriots. When the springs of action in hypocritical patriots are discovered, it will appear that the love of their country was least in their view. It is as impossible for a vicious person to be a patriot as for a libidinous man to be chaste. Self denial is a virtue essentially necessary in a true lover of his country; for he must give up his own private interest for the good of the community, if he means to deserve the name of a patriot.

When the generality of people are not willing to part with their unnatural pleasures, a nation must infallibly be near its ruin. What I mean by unnatural pleasures is, all those adventitious desires, and their gratifications, which our nature does not prompt us to. Nature does not dictate to any per-

son, that he should lie, steal, murder, or commit fornication ; on the other hand, she has provided remedies against them. The dictates of the mind are naturally against all injustice, either with respect to ourselves or others ; it requires a great perversion of soul for men to have the better of their consciences.

Vicious men frequently consider animal impulse to be the voice of nature ; and with regard to beasts it is true.—But there is more belongs to the nature of man than mere appetite. He is endowed with reason and conscience, which are intended to regulate his animal feelings ; and when he does not listen to the voice of reason, he acts unnaturally. Though it is natural for all other animals to follow the impulse of their appetites, it is not so in man ; for he never acts according to nature but when all his feelings are under the government of his reason and understanding. By attributing all our deviations from virtue to our nature, we father all the evil in our conduct upon our maker, and make him the author of sin. Though it is natural for man to propagate his own species, yet he is by nature placed under a moral government in so doing ; otherwise he differs nothing from a beast. Men who follow the impulse of appetite, and ramble through scenes of dissipation, contrary to the dictates of reason and conscience, are guilty of the violation of the laws of nature, and

ought to be considered as lunatics, and be put under the direction of keepers.

Those vices which we ourselves are not so much addicted to, we are ready to consider them as the most unnatural, and attended with the highest aggravations; but we are ready to forget that all sin is unnatural. It is as much contrary to nature for a man to seduce another man's wife, as it is to break his house, and steal his goods;—and it is as much contrary to the moral dictates of the understanding to rob a young woman of her chastity, as it is to rob a young man of his money; and yet men plead nature for the one, and account the other unnatural. It is something more than probable, that if men would listen to the dictates of their rational nature, and begin in due time to curb their appetites, that they would find no more inclination to one vice than another, and would have no apologies to make for any sin. It is an observation of an heathen historian,

That when a man, inclined to “sensual gratifications, gives himself up to idleness, and impure bodily pleasures, after having for a time indulged himself in libidinous practices, and having, through want of consideration, wasted his strength and time, he accuses the infirmity of his nature.”

This was the case of the Romans, when luxury and profligacy was come to a great height; and is ordinarily the case with all people under the same circumstances. Na-

ture is blamed, when it is only the habits which men have acquired that are the cause of their errors.

Nothing can be more dirty and vile, than to impute our crimes to our nature, which is no ways to blame. By the same rules, and for the same reasons that a man repents of a crime, he might have avoided it. If he repents of it because he perceives it an evil in itself, he might have seen that before he committed it; for the law was as plain before as after. If he only repents of it because it hurts him, he is no true penitent, and has no aversion to vice. Men who have no aversion to folly till they are not able to commit it, stand a great chance never to repent; for the want of power will not remove the inclination, and while the inclination remains, the person is much the same as he was before. The community may have the advantage of his want of power, but his moral character is the same.

In the land of Moab, the principles of morality were not taught and inculcated upon the subjects. Improvements there, were all of another sort. The mathematics, natural history, agriculture, poetry, and the fine arts seem to have been studied; but the science of morals was totally neglected. This was a great misfortune to the people, who were left ignorant of the true principles of right and wrong, and were not able to distinguish between the errors of their own choice, and

the infirmities of nature. Mathematics, and the other sciences, though they are useful studies, and tend greatly to enlarge the human mind, yet have not in general a great influence upon the hearts of those who are the greatest adepts in those sciences. For men who pretend to study nature, and are acquainted with physical principles, to behave unnaturally is highly absurd;—and yet there are so many facts to confirm this, that it is impossible to deny it.

If morality were studied with as much assiduity, it would infallibly mend the heart, and dispose men to behave wisely and soberly. Pythagoras, Leucippus, Democritus, Anaximander, and all the rest of the tribe of natural philosophers, were far from doing so much good to mankind as Socrates, nor were any of them so good men; which, though it does not prove their science to be bad, yet declares that it is not so useful for reforming the heart as the science of morals. Pride and vanity ordinarily attend the knowledge of things, but the knowledge of God and ourselves has an immediate tendency to keep men humble.

It is not much to be wondered at, that morality was not taught nor practised in the land of Moab; for some christian nations are very deficient in this respect.—Even Great Britain is not remarkable for the knowledge and improvement in morals. The lands are wonderfully improved of late years, and there

have been great improvements in arts and manufactures ; but the minds of the inhabitants have grown worse instead of better. The very mode of education is quite altered from what it was in former times ; the principal education which is now bestowed upon youth is to make them appear like gentlemen and ladies, instead of teaching them to deserve well of the public. It may truly be said, that their bodies are taken care of, but their minds are neglected. When young people are not acquainted with those obligations they are under to the community, they necessarily turn selfish, and look upon themselves as the chief object of all their own concerns,—that the community was made for them, and not they for the community.

The notions of friendship which we read of, that prevailed among ancient people, are not regarded, nor the importance thereof recommended as it ought to be. Instead of friendship in its proper sense, we have received a substitute, which is the very bane of society, and that is dissimulation. This is practised in its full extent over the whole nation ; so that a person who speaks as he thinks, and utters the real sentiments of his heart as a friend, is accounted a very ill-bred man, and not fit to be admitted into genteel company. Morality requires, that all persons speak according to truth, and express the real thoughts of their hearts without disguise. The true cause of all divisions, and mischiefs

among men, proceed in a great degree from dissimulation; for after they have acted in feigned characters towards one another, and come at last to be discovered, it raises endless suspicions and animosities, which it is impossible to remove without a manifest proof of sincerity, which is incompatible with the principles of men of that character.

Persons of the same profession, and on the same side of a question, instead of that open simplicity which becomes friends, (and which among honest men will receive the highest approbation) observe a sort of caution and reserve, which is not consistent with honesty or true friendship. Among politicians this is called prudence; but among good men it is accounted cunning. It is inconsistent with true morality to keep a reserve among friends; and it argues the want of real friendship where it is practised. Among Moabites it might be tolerable, but among christians it is an abomination.—Among christians it never can happen; for whoever is destitute of simplicity and openness, is no christian according to the New Testament sense of the word. All heathen nations have been ruined by riches and luxury, as well as Moab; but perhaps it would be thought to be an unfair method of reasoning, to infer, that the same thing would happen to any christian kingdom. For tho' as great vices are practised in some christian countries, as ever were practised among the Romans, yet they perhaps may be saved by

their faith. If this is not the case, I can see no advantage this nation obtains by the thirty-nine articles; for if the inhabitants of Britain at this day, are not saved by their faith, there is not a sufficient quantity of good works in the whole island to save them.

The good works of Britain are something like those of Rome, in the time of the Jugurthine war.—“The nobility turned their

“dignity, the people their liberty, into licentiousness. All things were divided be-

“tween the two parties, and the commonwealth was torn to pieces between them.

“The faction on the side of the nobility was the most powerful; the people being di-

“vided among themselves weakened their own party. A few had the direction of

“all things, both at home and abroad.

“The treasury, the government of provinces, honours, and triumphs, were in the

“power of the same persons; the people were oppressed with war and poverty.

“The Generals divided the spoils of war among a few of their friends, and distri-

“buted the prize-money among their favourites. The parents and children of those

“who had served in the wars, were driven from their possession by haughty noblemen,

“whose avarice knew no bounds, and paid no regard to any thing, whether civil or

“sacred. It proceeded so far as to hurl all things into confusion. The few of the

“nobility, who at first opposed the measures

“ of the rest, were borne down by faction,
 “ and the commonwealth was torn asunder
 “ as by an earthquake.”

This account of the Roman state, given by Salust, very much resembles the present state of *Great Britain*.—It is at best a dirty description, but it is exceedingly just.—But as I intend, in the next discourse, to consider the doctrine of National uncleanness, I shall conclude this sermon.

S E R M O N VII.

JUDGES iii. 22.

And the dirt came out.

NATIONAL character may be considered with regard to the religion and the morals of the Inhabitants. When the religion of mankind renders them cunning, designing, and suspicious, it argues the real want of truth in their hearts; for charity, which thinketh no evil, assumes no disguise, and avoids all suspicion, unless upon the most palpable evidence. A mask of religion, where there is no truth in the heart, is a very dirty thing, and worthy only of abandoned wretches, who turn all things either into the service of their interest, or the gratification of their appetites. Some men profess Christianity for the love of money, such as bishops who do not believe the gospel, and yet are tenacious of the articles of the church; and

on, der pensioners who take the sacrament merely to qualify themselves for their office.

ven ent rty But nfi- , I Infidelity among the clergy, and dissipation among persons in high life, will always soon corrupt a whole nation ; for when the lower ranks of people perceive that their religious teachers make use of sacred things as tools to temporal advantage, they are ready to consider all the duties of religion as matters wholly calculated to serve private interest. Upon this principle they consider it to be lawful for them to make the same use of godliness that their teachers do. Their reasoning is undoubtedly false, but they learn this infidel sophistry from the clergy, whom they see constantly practise it. Duty and interest are joined together in the New Testament in another manner ; for the maxim is, He that will not work shall not eat. But in Moab, and some other parts of the world, this rule is reversed, and those who work not, eat all ; and those who labour hard, are destitute of the necessaries of life. Persons of any discernment cannot help observing, that this is inconsistent with reason ; and as it is the practice of men who deal principally in religion, they are ready to determine that religion is an unreasonable thing, and for this reason give it up. The clergy, in this case, are the authors of infidelity, and by their example, make infidels of the people.

When this species of deism is prevalent in a national character, it destroys all confidence

among men; for persons who are once accustomed to consider religion as a policy, will practise other matters in the same way. It is from this cause that men sell their country, and betray their friends; when once they proceed so far as to think sacred things venal, they will not hesitate to make merchandize, of all other things. Bribery and bankruptcies, proceed from this cause; men first become accustomed to attempt to impose upon the Deity, and deceive themselves, and after that, have no remorse in cheating one another. It is impossible that men can have any moral principles, who behave unworthily towards the Deity, or who have not moral excellence in their view; for though penal laws may restrain them from doing things which tend to their own hurt, yet as soon as fear is removed, there is no check upon them.

When the inferior ranks of mankind observe, that learned men, and persons who go foremost in religious offices, can buy and sell them as others do land and cattle, they soon come to determine that there is no difference, and behave accordingly. When venality and corruption is predominant in the ecclesiastical system of any nation, it will not be long before it become an universal character. It must be indeed allowed, that in such established systems of religious policy as those in Great Britain, it is impossible to avoid corruption; for as they are all founded upon the perversion of divine revelation, they can have no

tendency to promote morality. But this is undoubtedly an unclean circumstance in the character of a nation, when the very thing which ought to keep it pure, immediately tends to corrupt it. The passions and appetites of men have only two things which can be proper checks to their irregular fallies; and these are religion and penal laws. If the sense of the first is once removed from the minds of men, they will find a thousand methods to evade the latter. When the principles of the gospel are inculcated and believed, they teach men to deny all worldly lusts and affections, and make them act from principles of love to truth and goodness. Under this influence no person will do an unworthy thing; though he might do it with impunity, he considers it as vile, and therefore will not do it.

Penal laws may lop off some corrupt branches, but the root of error will still remain, unless it is purged away by the influence and power of religion. It is the real want of true religion which is the source of all the present defects of national character in the world. There would be little necessity for such a multitude of penal laws, provided there was as much pains used to promote true godliness, as there is frequently used to restrain vice, upon wrong principles. The source of corruption rests in the church; for if her doctrine and policy were according to divine revelation, they would prevent those impure

and dirty practices which prevail over many nations.

In this nation, the very teachers of godliness are, from their first setting out, initiated in dissimulation; and, for the sake of wealth, honour, or preferment, subscribe articles of faith that few of them believe, and seldom or never teach. This is no secret, and the laity know it exceedingly well. They therefore reason in their own behalf, from the practice of the clergy, that, seeing their teachers behave hypocritically with God, they may do the same thing with a less degree of criminality. What has often been attributed to luxury and dissipation, among the lower ranks of men, is really occasioned by their infidelity; for if they believed that there was any truth in religion, they would avoid luxury, and pursue temperance. It is because men first forget God, that they do evil; *calum ipsum petimus stultitia*. All the complaints concerning the national debt, taxes, and burdens upon the subjects, proceed from a cause which few ever consider: the growth of infidelity is the reason of all these evils. The bishops set the example, and all religious characters follow them. It is amazing that there should be such a profession of religion amongst all ranks, when the very source thereof is infidelity; and yet the truth of this assertion is easily demonstrated. I do not mean that a great number profess deism, but they do

worse, they practise it. Can there be a worse species of infidelity, than to profess God, and in works to deny him? And is it not a denying of God, to reject the plain rules of his word, concerning the form, doctrine, and discipline of his church; to aspire to power and preferment upon the ruins of truth and uprightness; to mingle those things which God has separated, and unite the splendor of the kingdoms of this world with the simplicity of the religion of *Jesus Christ*; to subscribe articles of religion, and preach doctrines altogether opposite thereto? If there is not truth in what has been now affirmed, the modern sermons of the bishops and their clergy have no meaning, and the articles have no signification.—Nothing, except heart infidelity, can determine learned men, for the sake of temporal advantages, to sacrifice conscience, truth, and honesty: For who can be persuaded that a man, with his eye upon the enjoyments of a better life, would behave so deceitfully with both God and man, as to engage to perform services which he never intended to fulfil, and to believe doctrines which he did not understand, and are in their own nature absurd?

The dissipation of persons of high life always proceeds from a defect in their religious principles;—I mean not those of which they make some profession, but those which ought to be springs of action in their hearts, or real principles of faith in the mind. For it

is impossible that men of understanding could wilfully and openly transgress divine precepts, provided they believed that there was any truth in religion. If ministers of state were persuaded in their own minds, that there was a state of rewards and punishments in the world to come, they would be afraid to embezzle the public finances, lest they should be called to an account, when the sovereign, instead of screening them from punishment, or covering their iniquity, will expose their villainy, and render strict justice to every one.

Every attempt to injure the public is an insult upon God Almighty, and deserves a severe punishment,—which must, if God is just, be inflicted upon all obstinate oppressors. A persuasion of the moral justice of the Almighty, and that he is obliged in character to bring guilty offenders to a trial, either in this life or the next, would effectually prevent persons of power and authority from injuring the public. This shews how necessary it is to have the principles of religion inculcated upon the minds of men intended for high offices. As long as men are truly religious, they will never turn dissipated; and every approach to dissipation is a remove farther from the belief of Christianity.

When infidelity is the leading portrait of national character, there is no species of iniquity which men will be afraid of; and when there is an universal dissipation, it is a sure sign of prevailing unbelief. It is a fact

too palpable to be denied, that whatever profession of regard persons in high life pay to the national religion, they lay nō weight upon the principles of Christianity, otherwise they would be as zealous in promoting mercy, judgment, and faith, as they are in pursuing the pleasures of sense, and the forbidden enjoyments of irregular appetites. To profess a form of religion, is consistent enough with infidelity and practice, and the private sentiments of infidels,—who, as they account matters of true religion of no other use or importance than to serve their private worldly interest, think it no crime to profess it for that purpose.

In France all ranks of people are obliged to profess the national religion; but there is perhaps as much infidelity in that nation as any other kingdom in Europe, except England. Nothing tends more to promote infidelity, than obliging persons to profess a formal system of godliness upon pain of loss or punishment, which must be the case in all nations where temporal rewards and punishments are annexed to the profession of religion. It has been by many affirmed of late, that luxury and dissipation form the most conspicuous part of the national character of Great Britain;—and at first view this appears very probable; but yet is not true in fact. For infidelity is more universal than dissipation; and many, who neither believe nor practise the Christian religion, live in poor

enough circumstances, and never had it in their power to live luxuriously :—And more than all, infidelity is the cause of all the noted public vices, which abound both in town and country.

In the ancient Jewish nation, it is manifest, that all their immorality proceeded from their infidelity ; they first forgot God, their Saviour, and after that all sorts of wickedness became easy to them. —And it will be as impossible for men, who are firmly persuaded of the truth of religion, to live in the practice of vice, as it will be for them to continue to practise what they have a stated aversion to. Infidelity is an unclean part of a national character, and is the source of all the dirt which defiles a nation. If the nobles of Great Britain are really Christians, and believe the religion they profess, what means the history of corruption, adultery, and divorces, which is published all over the nation ? Is all this mere calumny and reproach ? Is there no truth in the records of Doctors Commons ? We must certainly be greatly imposed upon, if all those accounts are flagrant calumnies.

I would willingly suppose all these stories to be false, and shall only conceive myself in the land of Moab, where evil might be expected, and where infidelity prevailed from the throne to the cottage.

Eglon was undoubtedly a notable pattern of infidelity, and his clergy bright examples

of unbelief. The influence of the example of the prince and the priests had a strong effect upon all ranks of people; the impurity, which flowed from the loyal infidelity, infected the clergy, who knew that favour and preferment could only be obtained by conformity to the royal system; and the precepts and example of the priests infected all the people, who imagined that sin was attended with no danger, when they saw the priests commit it so freely. Hence, infidelity produced dirt of all sorts; for neither the love of moral excellence, nor the fear of offending the Deity, had any influence upon the conduct of the great.

The animal appetites, which have generally the strongest impulse, were gratified without reserve, because they thought nothing more excellent than the pleasures of sense, and had no fear of any consequence which might follow those beastly gratifications. In the court of Eglon there was neither love of truth, nor fear of evil; the first craving feeling was gratified, if the means could be obtained, though reason revolted, and good policy would have prohibited the gratification: — But where infidelity prevails, it naturally produces all sorts of immorality. Forms of religion are then intended as mere decoys to take in the unwary, and are made subservient means to fulfil the inordinate desires of degenerated mortals. Rituals of devotion, and places of worship, became tools of appetite,

and places of assignation. Thus the worship of Baalpeor was adapted to their lusts, and their outward respect to Deity rendered subservient to their abominable desires.

The Moabites, perceiving that persons of rank feared no sin, nor abstained from any animal pleasure, considered licentiousness as no crime; and because habits had made uncleanness natural to them, they viewed those unnatural desires as propensities implanted in them by their maker, in the same manner as they are in beasts. They therefore practised like other animals, and gave up reason to the force of appetite. Conjugal obligation was made void, and every man and woman fulfilled their carnal desires in the same manner as the most libidinous animals. It was impossible for dukes, earls, or lords, to know their own children, more than it is possible for English courtiers to know theirs; for they had all their wives in common. This was the only thing in Moab which was common; for land, houses, and money, were confined to a few over-grown chiefs, as in Great Britain. The very money which was collected from the public, for public services, was restrained to private purposes; and great men could with impunity devour millions, without fear or shame. All this dirt proceeded from infidelity, which was the leading part of the character of the nation of Moab. But without proceeding farther, I shall conclude this discourse.

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